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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes results obtained from a questionnaire mailed to 1,023 community college economics departments in the Fall of 1971. The basic objective was to ascertain the extent and type of instructional objective development and practice in community college economic education. The results obtained from this survey provide some indication of present instructional objective practice in economic education and also provide some basis for extension of such use. The results of the survey are tabulated in table form and supplemented by a narrative discussion of the results. The following 12 questions were advanced in the questionnaire: (1) Do you use instructional objectives, (2) Are these objectives given to students, (3) Do you have a criterion performance level, (4) Do you provide a credit/no credit offering, (5) Has your faculty or staff had training in objectives development, (6) What references did they use, (7) How would you evaluate the student response, (8) Would you be interested in using objectives prepared by the national professional associations in economics, (9) Do you use programmed instruction, (10) Do you use audio-visual materials, (11) What economics courses are offered, and (12) Have you encountered any transfer difficulties. (Author/AL)

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INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE ECONOMIC EDUCATION

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This report is to summarize results obtained from a questionnaire mailed to 1,023 community college economics departments in the Fall of 1971. The basic objective was to ascertain the extent and type of instructional objective development and practice in community college economic education. Questionnaires returned totaled 224 (21.9% return), and represented replies from 43 states.

Initial interest for undertaking the survey came from the author's research on effect of instructional objective treatment in economic education (Research report available from ERIC clearinghouse at UCLA, Order #ED-051-808.).[1] The results obtained from this survey provide some indication of present instructional objective practice in economic education, and may also provide basis for extension of such use. One resulting research proposal will be development of an instructional objective "bank" for economic education use (Proposal to be made to the Economic Education Center at California State College, Fullerton and to the California Council for Economic Education.).

The results of the survey are tabulated in Table I, and are discussed below according to questions stated on the questionnaire mailed.

#1. -Do your economics courses incorporate specific instructional objectives? Please describe such objectives (enclose a copy?) if used, or plans for development.

From the questionnaires returned and those responding (189 responded out of 224 returned.), there would appear to be a fairly high degree of instructional objectives use in economic education within community colleges (40.2%). In addition, some 30% of those not now using instructional objectives indicated either present or planned development.

However, this "favorable" degree of instructional objectives practice is limited in large extent. For no indication of instructional objectives practice is available for the 799 community colleges not responding, or even for those 35 colleges who returned questionnaires but did not answer this question (One might hypothesize lack of response is correlated with little use of instructional objectives?). In addition, many of those stating present use of instructional objectives indicated (either by comment or via a reading of the 38 copies returned) that objectives used were not "specific or complete" in design. That is, the objective may have been quite general in nature, and did not set a specific learning behavior, learning conditions, and performance criterion.

From such survey data and interpretation, the author would hypothesize: a) there is not at present a wide use of instructional objectives in community college economic education, and

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b) many of the presently-practiced instructional objectives formats do not include all prerequisites for effective instructional objectives practice.[2]

#1.a. -Are objectives given all students?

A rather interesting response was obtained here as follow-up to question #1, in that more colleges (102) stated objectives were given students than those colleges indicating use of objectives (76). This difference may well be that while a community college may not have specific instructional objectives formulated for economics instruction, the student might receive a course outline, etc. of general learning results expected.

In any case, it would appear that of the colleges responding, a high degree (60.0%) do communicate to the student the learning patterns expected. On the other hand, one may question how the student is to "guess" learning expected in the 40% of colleges not communicating such objectives.

#1.b. -What is the Criterion Performance level on objectives?

Of the 68 responses (224 returns, 76 indicated use) the mean performance level stated was 71.8%, with a range from 50% to 100% correct. The distribution obtained was; 100%-7, 90 to 99%-4, 80 to 89%-10, 70 to 79%-25, 60 to 69%-17, 50 to 59%-5.

Thus, the modal performance level of 70% appears somewhat low, especially with regard to Park's position that the level be 100%.[3] The real question, however, is the economic understanding obtained by such a level, and the "recycling" procedure afforded those students who do not obtain the specified standard. One would hope that some procedure of programmed instruction (Question #2 below) is available to enable the student to attain the performance criterion, although indication of such was not directly available from the questionnaire.

#1.c. -Is your economics course on a Credit/No Credit basis?

The largely negative response (67.9%) on this question would indicate a low degree of acceptance for non-letter grading procedures in economics instruction. Such practice may well be limited by the offering of economics courses (Question #4 below) primarily for the business or economics major in which letter grades are required by the four-year transfer college.

One may also question as to how the performance criterion stated on Question #1.b. does, or does not, relate to letter grade standards obviously preferred by community colleges responding to this questionnaire. That is, if few colleges use instructional objectives (40.2%), and if a low (71.2%) performance level is required by those practicing instructional objectives, how exactly is the "A-B-C-D-F scale" established to measure student learning in economic education? -- Again, such questions were not directly answered by the questionnaires returned.

#1.d. -Have you, or other economists at your college, had formal background (courses, workshop, etc.) in developing instructional objectives?

A surprisingly large number (58.3%) of colleges responding noted some background in instructional objectives formulation. This number (130) also appeared large against those colleges presently using (76) instructional objectives, and does provide a base for future development.

Sources of instructional objectives background noted on questionnaires included university and four-year college course instruction, Economic Education Center aid or workshops, and National Science Foundation Institutes.

One might therefore hypothesize that while use of instructional objectives may not be frequent, knowledge of such is fairly widespread. -- Perhaps the challenge is thus to "apply" this knowledge.

#1.e. -What references (Task Force Report, Joint Council on Economic Education, etc.) were used to construct your instructional objectives?

Once again, a surprisingly extensive knowledge of instructional objective literature was evidenced on the questionnaire, compared to those colleges not using such an approach.

The most frequently-noted references included books and materials by Mager[4] and Postlethwait,[5] and Economic Education Centers and institutes in the various states. Other references noted less frequently included Cohen,[6] the Johnsons,[7] NSF Institutes, and college instruction.

#1.f. -How would you evaluate your present student response (interest, learning, etc.) to your instructional objectives?

Again, a rather "odd" matchup of responses appeared on the questionnaires returned, as only 76 (#1) now use in specific terms, 102 (#1.a.) give objectives to students, yet 137 responded on this question. Such a difference may be partially due to the "specific vs. general" statement of instructional objectives noted earlier, and perhaps also to the inability to guage student attitudes.

In any event, there appeared to be quite favorable student response to use of instructional objectives, with ratings of Good -- 56.9%, Fair -- 40.1%, Poor -- 3.0%. Of course, these ratings are vague at best, and do not correlate student learning and attitude. But such attitude provides some encouragement to those colleges planning development of instructional objectives.

#1.g. -Would you be interested in using a set of instructional objectives in your economics classes, if prepared on a "professional" basis (American Economic Association, Joint Council on Economic Education, etc.)?

Clearly, there was a very heavy (87.3%) interest expressed in the availability of prepared instructional objectives. While many colleges qualified such interest by noting possible review or modificaiton of such a prepared set, much possible benefit from such a set was expressed.

This strong interest response lends credulence to the proposal noted earlier for a "bank" of instructional objectives, or for a "Task Force approach" by the AEA or JCEE.

#2. -Do your economics courses incorporate any form of programmed instruction (text, workbook, library check-out, etc.)?

This question, as well as #3 below, was asked as possible tie-in to use of instructional objectives, in that such methods may serve to aid those students not achieving the specified performance level. In addition, the literature[8] indicates high learning efficiency from programmed instruction, and the degree of utilization was therefore questioned.

Survey results would indicated fairly wide (53.8%) usage of programmed instruction, and some 30% of those not now using such an approach expressed interest in its development. However, only two colleges of the 120 now using programmed instruction utilize this approach on a student self-use basis (library check-out) coordinated with instructional objectives. The other 118 colleges note various types of programmed texts or workbooks (Attiyeh, Lumsden, Bach; Bingham; McConnell) used more on a supplement basis to a traditional lecture instruction mode.

Thus, while it would appear that programmed instruction is in wide usage, the author would hypothesize sole/serious instructional adoption of this method is quite rare.

#3. -Do your economics courses incorporate varieties of audio-visual materials (films, slides, cassettes, etc.)?

Again, this question was asked as a possible tie-in to instructional objectives usage, via self-pacing for those students not meeting performance levels required.

However, the vast majority of those using audio-visual materials employ this teaching technique as a supplement with traditional lecture presentation (illustrate lecture points, etc.). Thus, the heavy usage (78.6%) of audio-visual materials does not indicate widespread coordination with instructional objectives or self instruction (Only two colleges had "packaged" programmed instruction - audio visual-materials - instructional objectives coordinated offerings.)

Of the audio-visual materials used, prepared transparencies (McConnell, Dodds & Hailstones, Samuelson) were noted most frequently. Some films ("American Economy" series) were also noted, and a very few colleges had prepared their own slide and cassette presentations. In addition, three colleges noted use of video tape presentation (self-prepared).

An obvious "market demand" was indicated throughout the responses, as many returns (perhaps 50%) decried deficiency of prepared audio-visual materials for economic education. Evidently, few colleges or faculty have budget/time/facilities to prepare their own audio-visual materials, and do not now feel this need is adequately met by publishing houses. (Contact of Economic Education Centers in the various states, or with JCEE in New York, may aid in locating presently-available audio-visual materials.)

#4. -What economics courses are offered by your community college (underline those with prerequisites, and circle those in which instructional objectives are used)?

This question was asked in order to see if any particular economics offering was emphasized in instructional objectives application, and also to check the extent of the community college economics curriculum.

All of the 224 questionnaires returned responded to this question, and all 224 (100%) offered both micro and macro economic theory (micro/macro offering order reversed in some 60% of responses). The survey course for non-majors in business or economics ("general education", usually 1-semester in length) also appeared widely offered, as some 60% included such in their response. Consumer economics (also termed "personal, family, or practical"in returns; usually 1-semester on non-transfer basis) was offered by some 20% of the returns, and noted as an area of possible development by another 30% of the colleges. In addition, some 5% of the colleges responding (11) indicated minor economics offerings including U.S. Economic History, Economic Statistics, Economic Geography, and Philosophy of Economic Thought.

In general, this heavily transfer-oriented economics curriculum offering utilized instructional objectives only in the micro and macro theory courses. Only five colleges indicated their survey of economics courses as utilizing instructional objectives, while one college used instructional objectives in its economic statistics course.

Prerequisites were heavily (90%) required (English or math test scores, sophomore standing, etc.) in the micro and macro courses, but only 30% had prerequisites for the survey of economics courses. Only 2% of those colleges offering consumer economics courses noted prerequisites, but almost all (95%) of those colleges having "minor" economics offerings (economic history, economic statistics, etc.) specified prerequisites.

#5. -Do your students encounter any transfer difficulties (courses units, grades, etc.) of your economics courses at neighboring four-year colleges or universities?

With all questionnaires returned (224) responding on this question, the resounding reply (94.2%) was, "no difficulty whatsoever." The few (5.8%) indications of transfer difficulty appeared (Returns were sketchy in description) to stem from "technical institute-type" community colleges, and mainly in

traditionally non-transfer economics courses as consumer economics.

While such a response is perhaps a compliment to the community college economics curriculum in general, the author would still question the apparent heavy emphasis on transfer economics offerings. This concern is, or course, not at all new or unique, and extends to many disciplines in addition to economics.[9] The author would hypothesize/recommend that much developmental economics curriculum attention be paid to those community college students who do not transfer to a four-year college or university.

Table I

Survey Questionnaire Results

Community College Economic Education

#Surveys sent = 1,023
#Returned = 224 (21.9%)

Question	#Responses	#Yes	%Yes	#No	%No
#1 - Use Instructional Objectives	189	76	40.2	113	59.8
#1.a. - Objectives to students	170	102	60.0	68	40.0
#1.b. - Criterion Performance level	68	Mean of 71.89%			
#1.c. - Credit/No Credit offering	221	71	32.1	150	67.9
#1.d. - Training in objectives	223	130	58.3	93	41.7
#1.e. - References Used	180	Mager, Postlethwait, Economic Education Centers, Cohen, Johnsons, NSF Workshops			
#1.f. - Student response	137	Good - 78 - 56.9% Fair - 55 - 40.1% Poor - 4 - 3.0%			
#1.g. - Interest in prepared set	221	193	87.3	28	12.7
#2 - Use of Programmed Instruction	223	120	53.8	103	46.2
#3 - Use of Audio-Visual Materials	224	176	78.6	48	21.4
#4 - Economics Courses Offered	224	Micro and Macro Theory -100% Survey (non-major, 1 sem.) - 60% Consumer or Personal - 20% U.S. Economic History, Statistics, Economic Geography, etc. - 5%			
#5 - Transfer Difficulties	224	13	5.8	211	94.2

Footnotes

1. A full range of research reports is available from the ERIC clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 96 Powell Library, University of California, Los Angeles, California, 90024.

2. Burns, Richard W., "The Theory of Expressing Objectives," Educational Technology (October 30, 1967).

3. Park, Young, "Learning Accountability And Instructional Objectives," Address delivered to the Third Annual Audio-Tutorial Conference (Nov. 2, 1971), ERIC clearinghouse for Junior Colleges.

4. Mager, Robert F., Preparing Objectives For Programmed Instruction (Palo Alto, California: Fearon Publishers, 1961).

5. Postlethwait, S.N. and Novak, J. and Murray, H., An Integrated Experience Approach To Learning (Minneapolis, Minn.: Burgess Publishing Company, 1964).

6. Cohen, Arthur M. and Brawer, Florence B., Measuring Faculty Performance (Wash., D.C.: American Association of Junior Colleges, 1969).

7. Johnson, Rita and Stuart, Developing Individualized Instructional Material (New York: Westinghouse Learning Corporation, 1971).

8. Attiyeh, Richard and Bach, G.L. and Lumsden, Keith, "The Efficiency of Programmed Learning in Teaching Economics: The Results of a Nationwide Experiment," American Economic Review (May, 1969), pp. 217-223.

9. Medsker, Leland L. and Tillery, Dale, Breaking The Access Barriers (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), Chapter 4. This book is the fourth in a series of profiles sponsored by The Carnegie Commission On Higher Education.

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